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ABSTRACT

The Maine Aspirations Compact was formed in 1988 as an education/business partnership to build the capacity of families, schools, businesses, and communities to work together in helping students expand their aspirations. The Compact has defined its work in the form of three goals discussed in this report. The goals are to help students to: (1) raise their personal expectations; (2) improve their academic performance; and (3) expand their educational, career, and personal choices. In this report, each of these goals is discussed in sections defining the goal to be achieved and stating the barriers to be overcome to accomplish this goal, followed by strategies to build capacity for future success in each area. A final section offers suggestions on what is required to implement the strategies. The report is designed to provide integrated, comprehensive strategies for raising student aspirations. It offers ways to think about and tackle the problem of low aspirations. The strategies were chosen because they have the promise of being successful individually or in combination; some of the strategies are already being tried in communities and schools in Maine. (KC)

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HELPING CHILDREN

STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING THE ASPIRATIONS OF MAINE'S YOUTH

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MAINE ASPIRATIONS COMPACT

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HELPING CHILDREN Succeed

A Report Prepared by the
Maine Aspirations Compact
An Education/Business Partnership

January 1989

STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333

JOHN R. MCKERNAN, JR.
GOVERNOR

Dear Friend,

In January 1988, we established the Maine Aspirations Compact under the leadership of Co-Chairs Commissioner Eve Bither of the Department of Educational and Cultural Services and John Rowe, President of Central Maine Power Company to encourage partnerships between business and education to raise the aspirations of Maine's youth. For nearly a year, a 33-member advisory board has guided the Maine Aspirations Compact with staff support by the Maine Development Foundation and the Department of Educational And Cultural Services in working on student aspirations throughout the state.

There can be no more important priority than the education of our youth to achieve their fullest potential as individuals and citizens. Facing a rapidly evolving future, our children must aspire to direct and shape that future.

The report, "Helping Children Succeed: Strategies for Increasing the Aspirations of Maine's Youth," is the culmination of six months of Compact work to achieve its goals of helping students to:

- Raise their personal expectations;
- Improve their academic performance; and
- Expand their educational, career, and personal choices.

The report will both heighten public awareness of aspirations issues and stimulate local and state responses to student needs.

The report presents a comprehensive and detailed set of strategies that will lay the foundation for achieving the community, education, business, and family capacity to realize the highest aspirations for our youth. Its goals are ambitious and rely upon the leadership and commitment of all Maine people, but I am confident that Maine citizens will undertake the strategies to achieve them.

I want to thank the many individuals who have committed their time and expertise to this plan. It presents a challenge that we all should be proud to undertake.

Sincerely,

John R. McKernan, Jr.
Governor

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Preface

In this era of rapid change, education is a powerful influence on the future of our young people. An expanding global economy, a transforming workplace, and revolutionizing technologies are creating new demands and new choices. Individually and collectively we must come to grips with these new demands. Our children must aspire to understand and pursue these choices as they shape Maine's quality of life and economic future.

Given the challenges that our young people face, too many in Maine do not aim as high as they can. In their personal lives, their educational pursuits, and their choices for the future, these children do not aspire to make the best of themselves or their opportunities.

The Maine Aspirations Compact was formed as an education/-business partnership to build the capacity of families, schools, businesses and communities to work together to help students expand their aspirations. In accomplishing this, the Compact has defined its work in aspirations in the form of three goals. Those goals are to help students:

- Raise their personal expectations
- Improve their academic performance
- Expand their educational, career, and personal choices

This report was prepared by the Advisory Board of the Maine Aspirations Compact to recommend strategies to achieve the Compact's goals. The report is for students, parents, educators, business and professional leaders, policy makers, and for all other citizens who are responsible for the quality of our children's lives in homes, schools, and communities. The Compact expects that this report will both heighten public awareness of the issues and stimulate local and state responses to student needs.

The report is designed to provide integrated, comprehensive strategies for raising student aspirations. It does not establish a set of new mandates. Rather, it offers ways to think about and tackle the problem of low aspirations. It does not intend to make value judgments about the informed choices students may make.

The strategies included in the report were chosen because they have the promise of being successful individually or in combination; some of the strategies are already being tried in communities and schools in our state. Each strategy can be seen as a building block to accomplishing the goals of the Aspirations Compact.

A Raising the Personal Expectations of Students

What Do We Want to Achieve?

While there is no way to ensure that all children become well-rounded and productive adults, we can encourage the skills and attitudes and provide the experiences that allow children to realize their individual potential.

Growing up is never easy. The transitions from home to school and from school to the community and work are but a few of many important milestones. Growing up is a process without any one blueprint for success, a process susceptible to countless positive and negative influences. Those influences stem from the family, the community, and the school.

Yet, some forces are stronger than others. Self-concept greatly influences expectations of school, work, and community life. Children who feel good about themselves can visualize the potential for success. Children who trust and respect themselves can better understand that they control their life decisions. Because prepared minds are better able to grasp new challenges, opportunities unfold for those with this self-discipline and sense of direction.

What Barriers Must Be Overcome To Accomplish This Goal?

A positive self-concept is not built in isolation. There are many environmental factors that can tear at a child's self-concept and produce a child at risk of failure. Good relationships with others, including feelings of belonging and trust, play an important role. Children who are victims of child abuse, who live without the emotional support of a family, or who live in homes where drugs or alcohol are abused are especially prone to poor self-regard. Children who are victims of poverty grow up within a setting that can breed a sense of personal powerlessness.

Children who are themselves substance abusers are often running from a poor self-image. Many of the 3,000 Maine teenagers who become pregnant each year may lack the self-esteem and control over their own decisions to avoid pregnancy.

The values and the social and economic conditions of the community all influence the way in which families and individuals form their expectations for life. For example, students in economically prosperous communities more often perceive the link between education and opportunities. The parents of such students are generally socially skilled and politically effective and stand behind the education of their children. This involvement in school activities, coupled with the parents' educational level, is a significant determining factor in building personal expectations.

Isolation, whether psychological, social or geographic, may also contribute to lower aspirations. Isolation can engender fear of the larger world, creating boundaries and fewer perceived options for both children and their parents.

Issues of gender also hinder the personal expectations of students. Working to counter the problem of stereotyping is important. Teachers must consider whether they interact differently with girls and boys; parents must be aware of the subtle ways they encourage and discourage their male and female children. Children, regardless of their gender, must feel that the world of opportunities is open to them.

Often the community underestimates just how profoundly it can affect the life of a child. By the time a child is an adolescent, a long, intricate history in the community has influenced the development of the child's self-concept. Yet, that same community often judges an adolescent's aspirations and achievements as a mere matter of good will and will power ("she could if she wanted to"). By the same token, negative self-concept and actions on the adolescent's part are viewed as a matter of ill will and inferiority. In effect, the community feels rejected by "at risk" youth and, in turn, rejects them.

Positive beginnings are crucial in the formation of a child's self-concept. Parents play a primary role in this process. The more information parents have about this process, the more they can enhance it.

The early childhood transition from home to school is also critical. When children enter school lacking the necessary experience or physical, intellectual, and social skills, they often experience little success. They assume from the outset that they are failures. If such early barriers are not dealt with, they become progressively harder to remove.

While schools can be a prime vehicle for promoting positive self-concept, they may also present barriers to this goal. Schools that treat students as responsible individuals who can control their own decisions reinforce the students' positive self-concept. In contrast, school policies that engender distrust often lead to reinforcement of negative behavior. The adolescent, in particular, demands to know the reasons behind the tasks at hand. Unless schools offer purposes which can stand up to real questioning, they will not truly engage students. Our schools must avoid internalizing low or negative expectations of students and embrace explicit goals to develop the potential of all students.

Raising the Personal Expectations of Students: Strategies To Build Capacity For Future Success

All children need supportive home and school experiences to develop the intellectual, physical, and social skills which are vital to positive self-concept. In addition, children need opportunities to be successful and to be recognized for personal achievements. Without the experience of success, a child has little motivation to stretch and reach for new challenges. Building this capacity can be accomplished through a variety of channels:

1 School and community-based programs for children and parents need to be expanded. These programs include:

■ **Early childhood and quality childcare** programs designed to meet the developmental needs of children ages 0-5 years. Programs such as those that promote an interest in reading and language development and those that provide hands-on learning and play for preschoolers can have far reaching effects on the growth and development of children. Research has shown that when parents are involved in these programs their effect is even more profound. Also very important is the coordination between these early childhood educators and the school system to ensure the smoothest transition for the child. The 1987 report of the Committee for Economic Development entitled, *Children in Need*, concluded that "every dollar spent on early prevention and intervention can save $4.75 in the cost of remedial education, welfare, and crime further down the road."

■ Education programs that help parents understand and fulfill their role in supporting the developmental needs of their children. Parents are the primary influence on the development of their children. No other group or institution—including the school—has as much power to help children learn and grow. **Parenting education programs** are most effective when they begin at the preschool level. Once children are in schools, continued parental involvement in the child's education needs to be fostered. Parents are in a better position to meet the educational needs of their children when they are knowledgeable about school curricula, philosophy and policies, and encouraged to work in partnership with teachers.

■ **Community and school-based support groups** that help parents and students combat alcohol and drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and child abuse. Support groups must help parents and students identify these problems and recognize that the problems may be symptoms of other needs. The groups must let parents and students know how to reach out for help.

■ **Social service case management** that directly ties community resources to the schools. Too often, school personnel are asked to be social workers, psychologists, and family counselors when they may be untrained in these areas. Linking social service professionals to schools will more efficiently reach children and families at risk. It will also give the professionals who deal with children the opportunity to discuss their common problems.

■ Before and after-school **care for latchkey children**. Lack of supervision often puts children in situations where they are at risk. We need to creatively use school space and other community resources to provide alternatives for parents and children.

2 Guidance services must be made available in every school, including the elementary level.

Guidance services need to focus on helping students to recognize and develop their strengths, aptitudes, and personal values as a basis for future educational, personal, and career choices. Involving parents and teachers in guidance programs helps to build a meaningful dialogue between home and school.

3 Structured mentor relationships need to be available for all students.

Children benefit from the personal attention of adults and other students as part of a nurturing relationship. All students need coaches for academic as well as personal growth. This is a valuable role for business, professional, and community leaders, older students and teachers. Taking personal responsibility for local youth is a fundamental investment that we can all make.

4 Participation in extra-curricular activities, whether in schools or in the community, must be encouraged for all students.

These activities are important to the development of leadership and team building skills. They also encourage interpersonal reliance and confidence in the student's physical, intellectual, and social skills. Encouraging students to participate provides added peer and adult support and a sense of belonging. Extra-curricular activities are more than recreation; they are learning opportunities offering everyone an ungraded chance to try, to fail, and to succeed. The skills, values, and self-awareness these activities build need to be consistently reinforced as part of the academic experience.

5 School curriculum should incorporate meaningful community service.

In addition to connecting students with the community in a way that promotes a sense of individual responsibility, such service allows students to see themselves as contributing members of the community and to realize that success may be achieved in all aspects of life.

B Improving the Academic Performance of Students

What Do We Want to Achieve?

All students need a common learning experience that includes mathematics, reading, writing, foreign languages, science and technology, social studies, the arts and humanities, health and physical education. This common learning experience needs to be based on a curriculum that teaches students not only subject matter but how to think. Critical thinking and problem solving can and should be promoted and applied to real situations through every effort from kindergarten through grade twelve. Above all, we need to teach students how to learn and help them understand that learning is a life-long process.

Today, the common learning experience is not a reality. We know from the Maine Educational Assessment test that there is a significant disparity in the academic performance of students preparing for college and those who pursue other programs of study. The MEA tests student knowledge in reading, writing, math, social studies, science, and the humanities. Students who are not college bound, significantly more than half of Maine's high school students, score at the bottom third of the MEA. On a scale of 100 to 400, these students are scoring between 119 and 167 compared with college bound students who have score ranges of 381 to 400. This discrepancy in scores is alarming because it makes clear that we are educating students to two different curriculum standards and under two different sets of expectations in Maine.

Furthermore, far too many of our students drop out of school prior to high school graduation. Completing a solid K-12 academic education is more than an end in itself; it is an essential stepping stone to future success. Present and future work opportunities will demand thinking, flexible individuals able to embrace the challenge of change.

Currently, Maine graduates 78% of its students. While this is better than the national average of 72%, it is not good enough. Achieving a 90% graduation rate by 1993 would provide a significant number of young people with the knowledge and skills needed to secure a job or to be a contributing community citizen.

What Barriers Must Be Overcome To Accomplish This Goal?

Unfortunately, many individuals do not regard academic competence as an achievable goal. Those who consider academic achievement solely the result of innate ability can discourage many children from doing the kind of hard work that enables them to achieve that success.

Barriers inhibiting academic achievement may stem from the learning environment in our schools. Schools should balance the attention given to memorization and recall with opportunities to analyze and synthesize information and employ creative problem-solving. Unless academic disciplines are vehicles for the development of thought by all students, some of our children will be stuck memorizing for a test, not learning for life.

There are also a number of organizational barriers to flexible learning. Program scheduling and course offerings are often dictated by time constraints rather than by the students' learning needs. Schools are currently unable to compensate for the fact that one student may need eight hours a week of mathematics instruction while another may need only four to learn the same concept.

Inappropriate tracking of students, whether formal or informal, presents significant barriers to academic achievement. While some types of age and ability groupings can expand a student's academic and personal options, wholesale tracking practices that label groups of students as non-achievers or non-academic simply become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

An individual may also lack the requisite self-discipline or the supportive home environment needed for academic success. Poor study habits, the absence of personal learning goals, and a perception of academic material as irrelevant can contribute to this lack of self-discipline. Students who do not recognize themselves as learners are far less likely to develop the strategies necessary to persevere and conquer the material. Students need to become aware of themselves, how they are changing, and how they can use school experiences to explore and prepare for the future. Students are not likely to develop the self-reflection necessary to see the broader picture without sufficient access to guidance services stressing individual development.

Improving the Academic Performance of Students: Strategies To Build Capacity For Future Success

Academic achievement can and must be made a reality for all students. Building the capacity to accomplish this requires changes in our schools and communities.

1 What students should know and be able to do must be articulated at the state and local level and become the performance standards to which we hold our schools accountable.

The process for establishing educational outcomes must engage the educational community and the community-at-large including students. Educational outcomes should reflect the knowledge and skills that students will need for the year 2000 and beyond. While there is now a trend toward information processing and computer operations, we have also seen a revival of interest in more traditional skills such as pottery and wooden boat building. Seemingly inconsistent, these trends point out the need for the acquisition of certain basic knowledge and encouraging creative uses of that knowledge. For example, no one knows how the computer of the year 2020 will be operated, but its operator will benefit from the ability to read, write, and understand mathematical processes.

2 The traditional uses of space and time in our schools need to be restructured to support the developmental needs of students and provide for more varied and active learning experiences.

■ **Teaching and learning styles** need to be understood and a better connection must be made with instruction. Much recent research has focused on the importance of individual learning styles. We know that some students learn best by visual presentation, while others benefit by hands-on experimentation. Teachers need more planning time and training opportunities to experiment with a variety of techniques corresponding to the individual needs of students.

■ **Individualized learning plans** need to be developed for all students no later than grade eight. It is important to outline a flexible educational and developmental path which is used to meet the changing needs of each student. Through this process, tracking inequities that limit student choices will be eliminated. The individualized learning plans should be done with the active participation of students, parents, guidance counselors, and teachers.

■ **Learning time barriers** need to be reduced. Ungraded elementary schools, for example, reduce learning time barriers by allowing developmental rather than age-determined placement of each child. Easing the rigid 45-minute class period structure would have the same effect at the secondary level.

■ **Experiential learning** needs to be an integral part of all curricula. For example, applied learning experiences need to be introduced in all academic programs and vocational programs need to become learning labs for the academic disciplines. This will give each student the chance to explore an idea from the abstract to its technical application. Exposing all students to applied learning allows opportunities for the demonstration of mastery and also serves to close the current gap between those labeled "college-bound students" and those labeled "vocational education students." This increase in active learning activities requires students to spend more time "on line" than "in line".

3 Schools must have high expectations of staff and students.

Schools should have a vision and operational philosophy that embraces the goal of academic achievement by all students. School administrators must provide leadership that translates that vision into action. Developing incentives for excellence in teaching and standards for academic performance through student, parent, and staff consultation is a key step in this process.

4 Technology-based tools for learning should be more rapidly integrated into the curriculum.

Current technology, from programmable hand calculators to modem-based, satellite-linked computers are not only instructional tools but also mechanisms to reduce isolation by expanding educational offerings in remote areas. But, encouraging widespread technological literacy means first reaching all teachers and administrators. Their training is critical. The potential for collaboration with the business community in providing that training is one option to explore more fully.

5 Students, parents, and the business community must be stronger advocates for education and its outcomes.

■ Public relations programs need to be developed by educators at both the state and local levels, so that parents and students can become more knowledgeable consumers and the business and professional sector a stronger ally of education. Parents and students need to be **informed participants in the education system** and have the opportunity to make decisions and choices about the education programs in their communities. The community, including business and education in partnership, must be actively involved in formulating educational goals. The business and professional sector must also reinforce the value of continuing education as part of its corporate and professional mission.

■ Business people and professionals who employ young people should view **school as youths' most important job**, because the education of youth is vital. Employers should know how well students are performing in school, provide incentives for them to finish high school, and encourage those with ability and interest to pursue post-secondary education. Many students working long hours lose sight of long-term goals in their eagerness for the short-term satisfaction of a paycheck. Employers must be prepared to put **limits on after-school work hours.** We know from the Maine Educational Assessment test that students who work in excess of 18 hours a week score poorly.

■ The business and professional community needs to provide support to parents and other employees so that they can build **closer partnerships with schools** in addressing the educational and developmental needs of children. This could take the form of release time to volunteer in schools, parent education programs sponsored by businesses, or scheduled parent-teacher meetings at the work site.

C Expanding the Educational, Career, and Personal Choices of Students

What Do We Want to Achieve?

Realized aspirations result not only from daring to dream but also from a realistic understanding of personal options and acquiring the skills to pursue them. Breakthroughs in technology and expanding world trade are transforming employment opportunities in Maine. In the future, many individuals will face multiple career changes that require a reassessment of educational, career and vocational needs. With 75% of new jobs in Maine requiring some form of post-secondary education, we must be prepared to significantly increase the number of students pursuing post-secondary education from the current rate of 54%.

If more Maine students are to pursue post-secondary education, then students, parents, teachers, and counselors need to acknowledge the importance of the choices made early in school careers. From elementary school on, students are required to make decisions about their school work which can drastically narrow or expand their life and career options. Students need the best possible information about the workplace they will encounter. They also need an opportunity to examine themselves and their own aptitudes and capabilities before being required to make important decisions about their futures.

Counselors, teachers, and parents must understand how the talents, skills, and interests of students match possible careers and how students can be helped to use such information to make appropriate choices. Career and educational counseling is an essential foundation that supports children and young adults making their first important life decisions.

What Barriers Must Be Overcome To Accomplish This Goal?

Many people feel trapped when it comes to career and vocational choices. We all have some reluctance to face the new, the unknown. For young people, a lack of family support to take these risks can compound existing fears. Geographic isolation can prevent a person from visualizing a broad range of career options. A lack of varied personal experience also has a strong impact. For example, in areas where there are not post-secondary schools, students may equate success with securing entry-level employment. Students tend to aspire to the familiar.

Financial considerations can be barriers in a number of ways. Many students concentrate on immediate financial gains instead of long-term goals. Limited in their experiences, they make uninformed choices. Other students do not perceive a choice. They feel they must put family financial needs ahead of personal goals, even to the point of dropping out of school. Equally serious is the fact that students may lack the financial support or knowledge of available support that would enable them to consider pursuing post-secondary education.

Illiteracy is another barrier. Many adults hold jobs that do not challenge their own potential because they lack the most basic employment skill—the ability to read. Such disenfranchised adults not only find it more difficult to succeed materially, but also have little hope of participating in the cultural or democratic institutions of our society. The way that adults in the community confront these challenges sends a powerful message to Maine's children.

Schools often provide a poor vision of the future. Many students perceive a lack of relevance between learning and future work and life choices. Schools need to link education with the notion of future choice and communicate this to their students.

Students must not get the impression that certain courses or skills are the ticket to success. They need to realize that they will require more than just the basic skills; they will have to continually learn, think and create; and that they will need positive work attitudes and strong personal ethics to succeed in the workplace of tomorrow.

The community at-large and the business and professional sector in particular are rarely involved in programs which educate local youth. When business and education are seen as two entirely separate ventures, students are less likely to understand the world of work.

Expanding the Educational, Career, and Personal Choices of Students: Strategies To Build Capacity For Future Success

Building students' capacity to truly understand their educational, career, and personal choices influences more than their own future quality of life. It is an investment in Maine's human resources and economic future. Students who can envision their future and work to make it happen are more likely to become citizens who can envision the future of their community and help to achieve it. Building such capacity will require new relationships among schools, community, and business.

1 Students need to be better equipped in making the transitions from school to work, post-secondary education, and training.

■ The transition to the work-place can be improved through the greater use of **cooperative education techniques** that allow internships and apprenticeships and other flexible opportunities for high school students that provide work place and community service experiences. The pilot program Jobs for Maine's Graduates recently begun by the state's Education and Labor departments is one such model.

■ Schools need to help students develop the expectations, values, and ethics which are important to our society. Students must learn and experience what will be expected of them as adults. School policies on student performance should reinforce the **concept of personal responsibility** and help to develop students' individual ethics.

■ The transition from high school to post-secondary education can be facilitated by a more **active higher education presence in Maine high schools** and by experiences that give high school students realistic exposure to college or post-secondary school life. Programs like Aspire, which encourage students to take college-level courses in high school, are important and must be expanded. Structured visits to post-secondary institutions with parents need to be organized beginning in the ninth grade. Local graduates should be invited to engage in discussions with high school students to give the students clear expectations of what lies ahead.

■ The **Career Information Delivery System**, which is a computerized career and post-secondary information system, should be expanded to provide better access to information on non-loan financial aid sources for post-secondary education. These systems should be made available to all middle, junior high, and senior high school students.

Counselors and teachers need to be fully trained in their use. Parents should be introduced to them along with their children.

■ Greater opportunities for high school students to make informed decisions about their future through **"hands on" experiences** should be provided. Programs like the Maine Aspirations Compact Summer Enrichment Program accomplish this through individual and group learning activities which encourage personal growth through the exploration of academic disciplines, work experience, and independent living.

■ Successful programs such as Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Services which provide students with special assistance in their **pursuit of post-secondary education** need to be expanded. Presently these programs, provided to students from income-qualified families, can reach only a small fraction of those eligible for help.

2 The experience base of teachers must be broadened if they are to have an increasingly meaningful impact on the future choices of students.

Programs like Educator-in-Residence for secondary and post-secondary educators give teachers a broader understanding of the changing world of work that can be conveyed to their students. Because career information should not be seen as the sole responsibility of the school counselor, experiences like this are vital for teachers.

3 Schools and communities must be concerned with the aspirations of adults.

Schools must become community centers that encourage life-long learning and make it easy for adults to continue their education. Empty seats in classrooms should be filled by adults needing academic programs from basic literacy skills to calculus. Adults should be actively encouraged to utilize and feel comfortable in schools. Children who see adults as learners will gain appreciation for the concept of lifelong learning.

4 Schools and the business community should collaborate to meet the education and training needs of the community.

Business spends millions of dollars yearly on the development of new training programs to help its employees cope with the changing workplace. Such programs can be of value to the professional development of teachers, school administrators, and community residents. Where feasible, businesses should promote cooperative agreements with schools and community adult education centers to open training opportunities to the community at-large. Both the business and education sectors have experience in designing such programs and need to explore appropriate ways of combining their efforts.

5 Access to two-year, post-secondary degree programs should be provided to all regions of the state.

Local colleges and vocational technical institutes respond to the needs of students and other community residents by providing multiple entry points to post-secondary education. The ability of these institutions to meet community, education, and training needs in the future can be enhanced through mechanisms such as telecommunications networks. This is particularly important to geographically isolated regions of the state.

D What is Required to Implement These Strategies?

This report is what the Advisory Board of the Maine Aspirations Compact believes must happen in Maine schools and communities to achieve the goals of raising students expectations, increasing their academic achievement, and expanding their life choices. Aspirations cannot be imposed upon students; however, the integrated strategies in this report can create the conditions in homes, schools, and communities which can lead to higher aspirations.

The report depicts an ideal. Helping to make this ideal real for our children was the impetus behind the formation of the Aspirations Compact. We recognize that many strategies in the report are complex; some will be difficult to implement. We also recognize that there are major issues that can impede the entire process. Such issues must be addressed:

Outcomes. We must reach a consensus about educational outcomes for Maine students—what they will need to know in the next century to be responsible and productive citizens. Such a consensus requires a dialogue among communities across the entire state. A newly-appointed statewide commission will conduct that dialogue by convening regional and local forums. Forum participants will address the educational needs of Maine students in the year 2000 and beyond. The commission will prepare recommendations on appropriate educational outcomes.

Expectations. We must re-examine the expectations set for our schools. Schools have been asked to absorb enormous responsibilities, many of which may be better handled by other community institutions. We need to determine the proper role of the school, family, and community in meeting the variety of developmental needs of students. Simply adding on the strategies outlined in this report is not a workable solution. In order to incorporate these strategies, we will have to set priorities for our schools.

Many of the traditional roles we have been asking teachers to play are not in keeping with their primary mission. Teachers must be allowed to focus their attention on teaching as opposed to clerical and student supervision tasks which detract from their professional responsibilities.

Parents, school administrators, teachers and the business and professional community will need training and support to change behavior and practices in ways that support the implementation of these strategies.

We must also begin to think of our schools as year round resources. This would allow flexibility and additional time for curriculum and staff development and provide more options for scheduling course offerings and extra-curricular programs.

Resources. The implementation of these recommended strategies along with continued improvements in educational quality will require significant and long-term commitments by the public and private sector and the development of more creative funding mechanisms for education. Building a constituency for providing new resources can be accomplished by demanding greater accountability on the part of schools and communities to improve educational performance in accordance with agreed upon outcomes.

In the end, accomplishing these strategies will require an acceptance of shared responsibility and leadership by educators, parents, and business, professional, and community leaders. Building a supportive environment in which our children can realize their aspirations can only be accomplished if we are prepared to work together.

This document will be followed by two reports that serve as guides to implementation. The first will outline the action plans of statewide education, business, and youth associations to support local implementation strategies. The second implementation report will be a handbook providing case studies of programs that have successfully incorporated each of these strategies.

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Maine Aspirations Compact
Background Information

The Maine Aspirations Compact was established by Executive Order on January 11, 1988. The Compact represents a new education-business partnership intended to focus statewide attention on the need to raise the personal aspirations and educational performance of Maine students at the elementary and secondary school levels.

Activities of the Maine Aspirations Compact include:

1. Technical assistance and small incentive grants to support local "demonstration compacts" in identifying the aspirations issues in the communities and developing action plans that can be implemented over a two to three-year period.
2. A series of reports, the first being *Helping Children Succeed*, which identify strategies and action plans for raising student aspirations at the local level.
3. Development of a clearinghouse for information on successful education-business partnerships from around the country and publishing information about its activities and about local demonstration compacts.
4. A summer enrichment program for high school students which provides structured individual and group learning activities. The program encourages personal growth through the exploration of academic disciplines, work experience and independent living.
5. Establishing a non-profit Aspirations Foundation to provide long-term financial and technical resources for Compact programs.

The Maine Development Foundation and the Department of Educational and Cultural Services jointly provide staff support for the Compact Advisory Board as well as technical assistance to local demonstration compacts. Day-to-day coordination is provided by the Maine Development Foundation. Staff members include: Laurie Winsor and Leanne Greeley Bond, Maine Development Foundation; and William Richards and Heidi McGinley, Department of Educational and Cultural Services.

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